

# News

## CASSATA FAMILY'S BAKERY A FIXTURE ON WEST SIDE



**Remarkable Rochester**  
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Columnist

It happens from time to time. Someone comes up to Loretta Streber of Greece or her sister Marilyn Solimano of Webster and asks if she is a "Cassata girl."

When either one allows that she was a Cassata before marriage, the next question is inevitable, "How's your mother?" Both sisters are then happy to explain that their mother is doing well, especially well for someone who is 105 years old.

The question reflects the place of honor that their mother, Barbara Cassata, had in their westside Rochester neighborhood almost 70 years ago when she was a warm and welcoming presence in the family's bakery at 455 Lexington Ave.

"She was the lifeline of the store," Loretta says. "She was the secretary of state. Happy, cheerful, calling everybody by name."

Barbara and her husband, James, who did the baking, opened the bakery across from Holy Rosary Church on April 14, 1950. An advertisement trumpeted "a full line" of baked goods, including pies, cakes, rolls and cookies. Opening day special: Buy one dozen cookies; get a second dozen for 5 cents.

Officially, the establishment was named Bakery Delight, but in the neighborhood it was quickly known as Cassata's.

The bakery and its shop were open six days a week, Monday through Saturday. James Cassata would leave the family home on Curlew Street in the middle of the night to start the baking. Barbara would be at Cassata's by 6 a.m. to put up orders and to greet the first customers.

Both Marilyn and Loretta worked in the store while growing up, Marilyn helping with the baking, Loretta in the front with sales. Their brother, Jim, started working in the bakery when he was young. A graduate of the American Institute of Baking in Illinois, from 1966 to 1970, he took over management of the bakery before he left to pursue another career.

"Our lives were really centered around the bakery," Loretta says. She



Barbara Cassata, center, flanked by daughter Marilyn Solimano of Webster and Loretta Streber of Greece. JIM MEMMOTT

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met her husband, Bob, while she was a teenager working in the store. Marilyn met her husband, Guy, who is now deceased, while she was working in the store, as well.

None of this is surprising, as everyone in the neighborhood seemed to stop at Cassata's or get baked goods delivered from Cassata's.

Kids from Holy Rosary School dropped in for doughnuts. Workers at nearby plants, including Kodak and Rochester Products, would get deliver-

ies from Cassata's. Hundreds of wedding cakes and First Holy Communion cakes went out from the bakery, where everything was homemade. During Lent, hot cross buns and fasnacht (also spelled fastnacht) kuechles were an everyday offering. "Long Johns," a variety of doughnut sold at Al's Stand on Bloss Street to thousands of Jefferson High School students, came from Cassata's. Nothing went to waste, as leftover delicacies were donated to convents and church rectories.



Ad from a neighborhood newspaper in April 1950 for the opening of Bakery Delight, which everyone knew as Cassata's. JIM MEMMOTT

Like his wife, James Cassata, who started work at age 10 as a paperboy in downtown Rochester, was a force of nature, producing a high volume of high-quality baked goods day after day. He expected his children to put in the same effort. "When someone walked in the front door, you better call him by name," Marilyn says. "You had to keep the showcases clean."

Speaking via FaceTime from his home in Florida, her brother echoed those words about their father.

"He had a very strong work ethic," Jim says. "And he drilled it home without mercy." Loretta and Marilyn, who are sitting in Barbara's kitchen in Greece, laugh. But they, like their brother, are quick to point out that the values they learned in the bakery served them very well as adults.

James and Barbara Cassata retired and sold the bakery in the mid-1970s. Later, the building burned down. In 1988, James Cassata died.

Barbara Cassata, who was born on Aug. 25, 1912, is a resident now of the Cottages at Park Ridge Living Center on Long Pond Road in Greece. She uses a wheelchair to get around and has some trouble hearing, but her eyes light up when she sees her daughters.

She has fond memories of her time at the bakery. "It was a good life," she says. And so it was.